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Letter dated 18 September 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward to you a concept paper for the Security Council open debate on the theme "Women and peace and security: responding to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations for sustainable peace and security", to be held on 5 October 2009 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **Le Luong Minh**
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Annex to the letter dated 18 September 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Responding to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations for sustainable peace and security

Concept paper

1. With the adoption in 2000 of resolution 1325, the Security Council recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming at all stages of peace process, including peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconstruction. The resolution provides impetus for actions by the Council, Member States, United Nations entities, civil society and other stakeholders to address peace and security matters in a coherent manner and with gender sensitivity. Since the resolution's adoption, the Secretary-General has submitted annual reports to the Council reviewing the process of its implementation, and the Council has adopted eight presidential statements and resolution 1820 (2008). These and other related documents emphasized that, for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, actions had to be undertaken to address women's needs and ensure women's equal participation and full involvement in mediation and negotiation processes, in all aspects of peacekeeping, in the management of humanitarian assistance, and in the process of post-conflict reconstruction.

2. The implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), the Security Council presidential statements and other related documents have achieved significant gains, particularly in enhancing the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including women and girls, and promoting the participation of women in peace and security processes. However, the situation is far from satisfactory with gaps and challenges remaining, particularly in the post-conflict period, in which women's potential contribution to peacebuilding is constrained owing to their exclusion from decision-making processes and inadequate recognition of and financing for their needs. Recent reports and studies, including those by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), reveal that there is a substantial gap in financing for women's needs in post-conflict situations. UNIFEM's review of almost 17,000 projects in consolidated and flash appeals for 23 post-conflict countries over the three years from 2006 to 2008 indicates that less than 3 per cent of projects submitted for funding explicitly target gender issues. Another study of provisions for women's needs in post-conflict needs assessments for eight countries reveals that just 8 per cent of proposed budgets included specific elements addressing women's needs.

3. A deficit in post-conflict funding for women's needs may reflect the inadequate participation of women in peacebuilding process, in particular in post-conflict planning and their underrepresentation in peace negotiations, mediation, security and justice reform. Also, according to UNIFEM, women accounted for, on average, just 7 per cent of negotiators on official negotiating delegations, and since 1992, only 2.4 per cent of signatories to peace agreements have been women.

4. The Secretary-General, in his 2009 report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, notes that threats to peace are often most imminent in the earliest post-conflict stages. This period offers a crucial window of opportunity to ensure the full and effective implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

5. In order to enhance and promote a coherent and effective response to women's needs in post-conflict reconstruction, women's participation in peacebuilding, planning and monitoring must be prioritized and supported from the earliest possible stages. Women's priorities must be addressed in conflict mediation, conflict resolution, peace negotiations and in early recovery initiatives. Neglect of women's needs in planning processes in conflict and post-conflict situations, in particular their needs for physical security, productive asset and income control, access to basic services, and access to decision-making, can impose serious costs on recovery and undermine the efforts to reassert the rule of law and restart the economy.

6. For their essential role in peace processes, until women's needs, priorities and concerns in conflict situations are addressed and resourced in a timely and systematic way, post-conflict reconstruction would continue to fall short of delivering effective and sustainable peace and development dividends. The Vietnamese presidency of the Security Council will convene on 5 October 2009 an open debate on the theme "Responding to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations for sustainable peace and security", in order to provide a forum for the Security Council, Member States and other organizations to review the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related documents and discuss further measures to respond to the needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations with a view to enhancing their participation and involvement in peace processes, thus contributing to the maintenance of peace and security. The open debate will be presided over by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Pham Gia Khiem.

7. In this regard, Viet Nam invites the Council, Member States and other organizations to exchange views on and discuss the following:

- Review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related documents
- Evaluation of the impacts of conflicts on women and girls and assessment of their needs in post-conflict situation
- Identification of ways and means to promote and sustain women's role in post-conflict reconstruction and reintegration, election, justice, and security sector reforms; and women's participation in nation-building, governance and policymaking bodies for socio-economic development, especially those for policies benefiting women and girls
- Coordinated and coherent support by the United Nations system for national capacity development initiatives in addressing the security, recovery and development needs of women and girls in post-conflict situations, with due respect for local particularities
- Role of Member States in ensuring women's empowerment, both political and economic, the protection of women's and girls' rights, and measures to

promote women's participation in all post-conflict activities and gender mainstreaming in post-conflict strategies

- Preparations for the tenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000).